

China in the classical era

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China in the Classical Era Dr. George Stone History 111 07/01/2012 The gender systems of the Classical era in China can almost be summed up with this phrase: " How sad it is to be a woman! " (Strayer) According to the Chinese traditions when a girl child is born the family is definitely not happy about the birth. The mothers of the girl child must do three things; " first she must make the child sleep under the bed this shows the baby that she is lowly and weak, second she must give the baby a potsherd or a piece of broken pot to play with to make the girl child realize that the only thing in life for her is housework, and thirdly the mother must make an offering to the ancestors when she announces the birth of the girl child. " (Strayer) Chinese women are considered less than men, less than the servants even. She must always humble herself to the man of the family, or her " master"; she is to do whatever the in-laws require her to do as well. The gender system of the Classical era in India is much like China. " In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent. " (Strayer) The female in India could never be on her own, her father rules her life as a child, her husband as a wife and if she has male children, she is less than her children if the husband ever dies. She must never be vain, show her face or her body, and woman of India is less than a person because of these rules. The gender system of the Classical era in Rome began very much the same for the females. "If each man of us, fellow citizens, had established that the right and authority of the husband should be held over the mother of his own family we should have less difficulty with women in general. " (Strayer) In Rome men were expected to rule. This may have come from the fact that in

order for Roman men to reproduce they had to pillage other villages and kidnap and rape the captured women. Over that time the men obviously ruled the house, the city and the land. Women were considered imprudent, rude and considered unbridled if they conducted any kind of business without a male guardian present. In all three cultures the same patriarchy is evident. Women were to do nothing without the say so of the man. Whether it is her father, husband, brother or son, she was to do as she was told when she was told and not complain about it. In China the females did as told, even by the mother-in-law, she was humbled, regardless of the situation, the husband could do as wished as long as it didn't bring shame to himself or his family. There really isn't anyway for the Chinese woman to get away from the patriarchy of her family or her husband's family. In India the only way that a woman could relieve herself from her husband's patriarchy " was to become a Buddhist nun and entering a monastery where women were relatively less restricted and could exercise more authority than in ordinary life. " (Strayer) Even though this relieved her of her families' patriarchy she still didn't have complete independence from male dominance. In Rome however, this is where the changes began for the Roman women. " When these speeches for and against the law had been made, a considerably larger crowd of women poured forth in public the next day; as a single body they besieged the doors, of the Brutus's, who were vetoing their colleagues' motion, and they didn't not stop until the tribunes took back their veto.... " (Strayer) The women of Rome were sick of being treated as less the nothings, they began to go into the streets, talk to whomever they chose even other women's husbands. They had decided as a group that it was time

that they had some rights. The women were no longer going to sit in the houses and have absolutely no wealth, no status, and no rights. There were some men against this and some men that approved of it. In the end the women won, and was allowed a few rights. This was taken away twenty years later though. The cultures of the Classical era showed that women were less than men, they had no rights, they had no wealth and they would always be obedient. This was an act to humble the women, they were slaves. The males always dominated the women; only the Roman women as a group were able to stand up for themselves. The Chinese and the women of India did not. They were obedient. Works Cited: Strayer, Robert. Ways of the World: A Brief Global History. Boston. New York, Bedford/ St. Martins 2011